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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY

JANUARY 31, 2003

1. This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for January 31, 2003. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICS, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

2. MERVAN GUL IS RESIGNING TO OPEN WAY FOR ERDOGAN
(Milliyet) AK Party is pressing the button today (1/31) to make it possible for its leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan to become prime minister. Mervan Gul, AK Party's first-listed candidate in the March 9 Siirt elections, is submitting his resignation to the Higher Election Council (YSK) today, to step aside for Erdogan. Erdogan's name, instead of Gul's, will be reported to YSK by February 6. AK Party has decided that there is no need for its two other Siirt candidates to resign.

3. WAR PREPARATIONS AT INCIRLIK
(Radikal) While the U.S. is counting days prior to a possible attack against Iraq, foodstuffs and water are being stockpiled at the Incirlik Air Base (Adana). U.S. officials are buying drinking water from Pinar Group, an affiliate of the Yasar Holding Food Group. Yasar Holding Food Group President Ahmet Arsan pointed to increased demand (for his water) from the Southeast and provinces along the Iraqi border. Adana Bar Association President Necati Erdem described the developments regarding a possible Iraq operation as worrisome. Hurriyet reported increased exercises at Incirlik, where U.S. and British passenger planes landed for military personnel transfer. Cumhuriyet reported many planes landed at Incirlik, while journalists were trying to film developments there.

4. ANTI-WAR SENTIMENTS
(Bolge/Milliyet) Ali Batman, President of the Adana chapter of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Merchants Chamber, claimed war rumors have had a negative impact on the fresh fruit and vegetable sector, leading to the suspension of business activities of 110 merchants over the past two months. In a meeting at the Mersin chapter of the Turkish Agriculturalists' Association, the Association's National President, Ibrahim Yetkin, said the agricultural sector would be most affected in the event of U.S.-led war in Iraq. Nearly 20 members of the Adana Bar Association gathered in Adana's Ataturk Park to protest the possible U.S.-led war in Iraq. Hurriyet reported that fifth graders of Adana's Hurriyet Primary School scribbled "No To War" and "Yes To Peace" on sheets of paper and displayed them on their classroom windows. Turkiye quoted Adana researcher-historian Ejder Dilci as saying that history was repeating itself regarding Iraq, against which the U.S. is preparing to launch an operation. According to Dilci, Germany asked Turkey for permission to enter Iraq through Turkey in 1941. He added that U.S. had requested permission from the Turkish government to enter Iraq. Evrensel reported that Mersin merchants would wear black ribbons today (1/31) to say "No" to war.

5. MERSIN PORT CLOSED TO FISHERMEN
(Evrensel) Fishing around the Mersin Port, which the U.S. wants to use during a possible attack against Iraq, has been banned since January 27. A U.S. delegation had previously surveyed the port. Fishermen criticized the ban, saying "we

cannot freely move about and fish in our seas."

16. INCREASED MILITARY ACTIVITIES IN CIZRE (SIRNAK)

Hurriyet and Milliyet reported increased activities at the Cizre (Sirnak) Tank Battalion, following the dispatch by the Turkish General Staff (TGS) of additional equipment and materials to the Diyarbakir-based Second Army, which is responsible for the Iraqi border. Some of the Battalion's tanks are now in open fields ready for deployment along the border. Also, military vehicles have begun to dispatch foodstuffs from Cizre to units along the border. Evrensel cited Sirnak Governor Huseyin Baskaya as saying that an exercise would soon be carried out near the province's Habur border gate against a possible influx of Iraqi refugees in the aftermath of a possible U.S.-led operation against Iraq.

17. DEPLOYMENT ALONG IRAQI BORDER

(Cumhuriyet) Military units, following the abolition of the State of Emergency (OHAL) in the Southeast, are being re-deployed to the Iraqi border. Military units affiliated with the Van Public Order Command, the Kayseri Airborne Command, the 18th Border Command, and the Third Army have been dispatched to Sirnak through Van. Milliyet reported that "critical" personnel who had been transferred from the (Malatya-based) Second Army to Western provinces might sent back to Malatya on TDY or re-appointed to their previous positions.

18. BODY OF BRITISH VICTIM OF PLANE CRASH MISTAKENLY BURIED IN ISTANBUL

(Sabah) The body of U.K. citizen Christopher Ringland, who lost his life during a plane crash in Diyarbakir earlier this month, was reportedly mistaken for that of businessman Nurullah Eren, who was owner of the Eren Holding Company and the Turkish Lacoste firm. The body had been buried at the Karacaahmet Cemetery in Istanbul. When officials found out about the error, Ringland's body was taken out of the grave and sent to the U.K.

19. TGS PREPARES ANTI-KADEK ALBUM: UNFORGOTTEN PHOTOGRAPHS

(Dunya) Turkish General Staff (TGS) has prepared an anti-KADEK album entitled "Separatist Terror Organization: Unforgotten Photographs" and distributed it to press organizations. The album includes photos about KADEK's murders and destructions in Turkey, as well as its international support.

110. ARRESTEES IN IDIL SUBJECTED TO TORTURE

(Evrensel) A delegation of human rights advocates carried out inspections in Idil (Sirnak), where thirty people had been arrested following the killing of a soldier of the district Second Infantry Border Battalion. Three soldiers had also been wounded. After meeting with the arrestees, the delegation said the arrestees told them they had been subjected to torture and maltreatment. Operations continue in the district, while locals are concerned arrests will increase.

111. SANLIURFA KADEK SUSPECTS RELEASED

(Evrensel) A Siverek (Sirnak) court released two people, including a woman, who had been arrested on charges of being KADEK members but ordered them to appear for their upcoming trials.

112. DEHAP OFFICIALS INDICTED FOR KURDISH SONGS

(Evrensel) DEHAP, Labor Party (EMEP), and Human Rights Association (HRA) Elazig officials have been indicted for having remained indifferent to Kurdish-language songs and pro-DEHAP slogans during their November 3 election campaigns. The officials called the indictments political, not legal.

113. KURDISH-LANGUAGE STORE FRONT SIGNAGE

Evrensel reported that the use of Kurdish-language store front signage by shops and places

of business in Diyarbakir was becoming widespread.

14. PRO-OCALAN PROTESTS CONTINUE

Evrensel reported continued pro-PKK/KADEK leader Abdullah Ocalan demonstrations protesting refusal of permission for Ocalan to meet with his attorneys and family members. Police intervened to disperse a pro-Ocalan protest, which resulted in the injury of five people, including three police officers. In Diyarbakir, 21 people participated in a hunger strike launched by a group of three women, all members of the Prisoners and Inmates Families Initiative. Also, a group of Initiative members held a press conference at the Seyhan (Adana) chapter of DEHAP during which they declared that they had started a hunger.

15. EIGHTEEN PEOPLE ORDERED HELD FOR RAPING A GIRL

(Evrensel) Eighteen Mardin people, including several public employees such as the Operations Manager of the district Governor's Office and a military captain, were ordered to remain in custody for having raped a 12-year-old girl. Police are searching for another ten suspects. Human Rights Association (HRA) Mardin President Enver Ete characterized the incident as "one of the social problems being experienced following clashes."

16. BOMB MAKERS RE-ARRESTED

(Turkiye) A Gaziantep court ordered the arrest of two of the three people who had been released after being arrested for possession of TNT and other materials used in making bombs. The arrestees were accused of providing support and shelter for a convict incarcerated in the Sincan (Ankara) Prison for bomb attacks against Gaziantep government offices.

17. WEAPONS DEALER ARRESTED IN GAZIANTEP

(Turkiye) During a sting operation, Gaziantep Jandarma Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime teams arrested 34-year-old Mahmut Yener, who wanted to sell Jandarma eleven Afghan-made pistols at EUR 450 (approx. USD 480) each. Yener admitted having brought the pistols in through northern Iraq. Following interrogation, Yener was arraigned in a local court.

18. ADANA HISTORIAN SAYS ARMENIANS CARRIED OUT THE MASSACRE

(Turkiye) During the "Armenians and Armenian Massacre in History" conference jointly organized by the Adana Governor's Office, the Ceyhan (Adana) district Governor's Office, and the Adana National Education Directorate, researcher-historian Cezmi Yurtsever claimed that Armenians were trying to misrepresent the massacres they carried out in Cukurova (Adana) and Anatolia between 1892-1922 as if they themselves had been subjected to those massacres. In those years, Armenians attacked Camili village, Adana's largest village, and tortured hundreds of people to death.

19. "PULUMUR RESIDENTS FREEZING TO DEATH"

(Radikal/Milliyet/Evrensel) Four days have passed since the January 27 earthquake in Tunceli's Pulumur district, but earthquake victims have not been provided with tents suitable for winter conditions there. There is a shortage of drinking water in the region. Tunceli Governor Huseyin Baskaya said damage assessment works have been completed in 28 of Pulumur's 38 villages. According to a preliminary report, 12 private and six public buildings were strongly damaged; 46 private and 83 public buildings were moderately damaged, while 75 private and 48 public buildings were slightly damaged. Turkiye reported that summer tents had been replaced with winter tents. Officials are trying to convince earthquake victims to settle in these tents, but earthquake victims are reluctant to move into the tents for fear of insufficient heating. They instead prefer to stay with relatives and neighbors.

120. "SHOWER" OF FAX MESSAGES BY KESK TO ANKARA (Bolge) Public employees, all members of labor unions affiliated with the State Employees' Union Confederation (KESK), faxed messages calling for the payment of compulsory payroll deductions plus interest. The faxes were sent to PM Abdullah Gul, DPM Abdullatif Sener, and State Minister Ali Babacan. KESK Adana Term President Ahmet Kilic said "the payroll deductions were employees' money, not a loan given to the State."

121. TEDAS SUBSCRIBER CONVICTED FOR ILLEGAL USE OF ELECTRICITY (Radikal/Evrensel) As a result of legal action begun by the Turkish Electricity Distribution Corporation (TEDAS) to prevent illegal use of electricity in Diyarbakir, a TEDAS subscriber has been convicted and sentenced to two months' imprisonment. For the first time in the region, a person has been convicted of illegal use of electricity. Based on TEDAS investigations, 7,000 TEDAS subscribers across Diyarbakir over the past two years misappropriated electricity.

122. ASSAULT AGAINST AGRICULTURAL DIRECTOR CONDEMNED (Bolge) Adana Agricultural Chamber President Ayhan Barut condemned the January 26 shooting of Adana Agricultural Director Fikret Coskun in his office as "intimidation and oppression of public employees." A police officer, together with his brother, shot Coskun twice in the leg for allegedly having sexually harassed his wife.

123. LEPROSY IN ADANA (Bolge) A statement released by the Adana Health Directorate said that there are a total of 62 leprosy patients in Adana. Their treatment has been completed. No new cases have been reported for a long time.

ECONOMIC AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS -----

124. UNEMPLOYMENT PAYMENTS (Bolge/Evrensel) Hasim Meydan, Director of the Employment Office in Adana, announced the payment of a total of TL 2.2 trillion (approx. USD 1.4 million) in unemployment salaries to 3,446 of the 3,561 people applying to his office in 2002.
HOLTZ